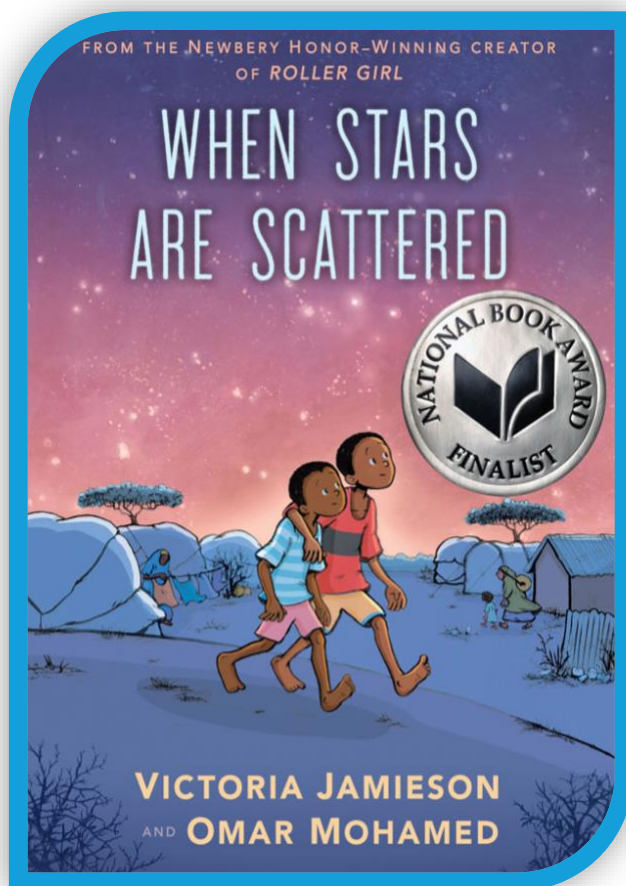




Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A World of Difference® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



When Stars are Scattered

Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed
(Authors)

ISBN: 978-0525553908

Publisher: Dial Books

Year Published: 2020

Age Range: 9-12

Book Themes

Refugees and the Refugee Experience, Family, Sense of Home, Helping Others

About the Book

Omar and his younger brother, Hassan, have spent most of their lives in Dadaab, a refugee camp in Kenya. Life is hard there: never enough food, achingly dull, and without access to the medical care Omar knows his nonverbal brother needs. When Omar has the opportunity

to go to school, he knows it might be a chance to change their future. It would also mean leaving his brother, the only family member he has left, every day. This graphic novel tells the story of a childhood spent waiting, and a young man who is able to create a sense of family and home in the most difficult of settings.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book along with your child or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a conversation that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the book?
- How thoughts and feelings came to mind while you read the book?
- What did you learn about refugees and the refugee experience from Omar and Hassan's life?
- Where is "home" for Omar? How does his idea of home change throughout the book?
- What does a social worker do? (If needed, share that social workers help people cope with and solve their problems in their everyday lives, especially people who need services, resources and access to opportunities.) Why do you think Omar wants to be a social worker?
- What was it like to read about Omar telling his story of what happened to his family in Somalia? How did you feel?
- In her poem, Maryam writes, "Be like a star. Shine your light. Shine your story. For stories will lead us home." What does that part of the poem mean to you?
- What did you learn that you didn't know before? What more do you want to know?
- How did you feel when the book ended and what do you think will happen next for Omar and Hassan?
- What do you think the book is called *When Stars are Scattered*? What message is the author trying to communicate through the story?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations that will make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

1. The Refugee Experience

Talk with your child about what it means to be a refugee. Based on what they learned from the book, elicit from them that a refugee is someone who flees war, conflict, or persecution (being continually treated in a cruel and harmful way). You can share that as of 2020, many people (82.4 million) worldwide were forcibly displaced from their homes and among them are nearly 26.4 million refugees, about half of whom are under the age of 18. Talk with them about Omar, Hassan and other characters in the book and their experiences as refugees. Ask about what made them become displaced, what life is like for them at the refugee camp, their thoughts and feelings about their lives, etc. Identify if you have anyone among your family, ancestors, friends or community who are refugees and what you may know about their experiences. Although we don't see what happens to Omar and Hassan when they arrive in the U.S., you can also talk about the challenges that refugees face when they are resettled to a new country and a home that is unfamiliar. People might be helpful and welcoming or they may be unwelcoming. You can also discuss how you have been and can be welcoming to those who are refugees or immigrants. (Note: Immigration is a different experience but there are similarities to the refugee experience, namely moving to a new and unfamiliar country and place.)

2. Sense of Home

Home is a strong and central theme of the book. Talk about how Omar, Hassan and those currently living in the refugee camp have left their homes. Even though for most of the book Omar still considers Somalia “home,” his and Hassan’s current but temporary home is the Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya. Throughout the book, Omar talks about desperately wanting to find a permanent home. At the same time, he also reflects on the fact that Dadaab is home because he is surrounded by people who love and support him. Explain that the refugee experience means moving homes and all the feelings that go along with those moves, from being displaced from your original home to coming to live in a new and often temporary home to hopefully finding a permanent home, but one that is a new and unfamiliar (and sometimes unwelcoming) place. Talk with your child about what home means to them and stress that home can mean different things at different times, like it did for Omar in the book. Ask them what are the core elements of home for them, and how they perceive a home they want to create for themselves when they grow up. You can also discuss the importance of being sensitive to the fact that not everyone has a permanent and/or ideal home situation so we should never make assumptions about that.

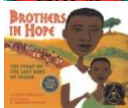
3. Helping Others

In the book, we see a variety of people whose job it is to help others. We meet Community Leader Salan who helps get Omar into school. We also meet Social Worker Susan Martinez who helps Omar and Hassan in a variety of ways. If they don’t know what a social worker is, explain that social workers help people cope with and solve their problems in their everyday lives, especially people who need services, resources and access to opportunities. Later in the book, all the students in school are asked to share what they want to be when they grow up. Omar says he wants to be a social worker, Nimo wants to be a lawyer “to help people know their rights,” and Jeri wants to be a teacher. Elicit/explain that all of these jobs/professions are focused on helping people. The real-life Omar Mohamed, after years in the U.S., founded a project called Refugee Strong that works with and helps refugees. Talk with your child about what it means to dedicate your work and job to helping others and how that impacts individuals and society. Point out people in your family, circle of friends or community who help others and what you think that means to them. Stress the importance of having people like that in the community and society in general.

Other Books You May Like



The Boy at the Back of the Class by Onjali Q. Raúf, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/the-boy-at-the-back-of-the-class



Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan by Mary Williams, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/brothers-in-hope-the-story-of-the-lost-boys-of



The Journey by Francesca Sanna, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/the-journey



Refugee by Alan Gratz, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/refugee

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on [category].

Websites

6 Ways to Be an Ally

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-to-be-an-ally-en-espanol

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying. (Also in Spanish.)

11 Ways Schools Can Help Students Feel Safe in Challenging Times

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/11-ways-schools-can-help-students-feel-safe-in-challenging

In incidents of alarming images and biased language in schools and universities, use these prevention, intervention and education strategies to promote inclusive school environments where young people can learn, thrive and become their best selves.

Helping Students Make Sense of News Stories about Bias and Injustice

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/helping-students-make-sense-of-news-stories-about-bias-and

When there are national news stories that involve incidents of bias and injustice, young people want to be part of the conversation. Here are suggestions, strategies and resources to help make those discussions rich and productive for young people.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/parent-family-and-caregiver-resources

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk

Provides the tools parents and family members need to engage their families in conversations about important news stories and other timely discussions about societal and world events. Includes discussion guides containing a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas for taking action and additional resources. See "[Refugees, Reactions and World Response](#)."

Welcoming the Stranger: ADL's Commitment to Protecting Refugees

www.adl.org/news/article/welcoming-the-stranger-adls-commitment-to-protecting-refugees

Provides information and resources on the refugee crisis as well as ways to take action.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

People, Identity & Culture: Immigrants, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[207\]=207](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[207]=207)

Religion & Religious Bigotry: Muslim/Muslim-American, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[229\]=229](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[229]=229)